

Week Ending Friday, September 2, 2005

The President's Radio Address

August 27, 2005

Good morning. In recent days, we have witnessed remarkable events in the broader Middle East. People are making the tough choices necessary for a future of security and hope that will make the region and the world more peaceful.

During the past 2 weeks, Prime Minister Sharon and the Israeli people took a courageous and painful step by removing Israeli settlements in Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank. I congratulate the Prime Minister for his bold leadership.

Now that Israel has withdrawn, the way forward is clear. The Palestinians must show the world that they will fight terrorism and govern in a peaceful way. We will continue to help the Palestinians to prepare for self government and to defeat the terrorists who attack Israel and oppose the establishment of a peaceful Palestinian state.

We remain fully committed to defending the security and well-being of our friend and ally Israel. We demand an end to terrorism and violence in every form because we know that progress depends on ending terror. And we will continue working for the day when the map of the Middle East shows two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

As these hopeful events occur in the Holy Land, the people of Iraq are also making the tough choices and compromises necessary for a free and peaceful future. In January, 8½ million Iraqis defied the terrorists and went to the polls to vote. Iraq's main ethnic and religious groups made the courageous choice to join the political process. And together, they have worked toward a democratic constitution that respects the traditions of their country and guarantees the rights of all their citizens.

Like our own Nation's Founders over two centuries ago, the Iraqis are grappling with

difficult issues, such as the role of the Federal Government. What is important is that Iraqis are now addressing these issues through debate and discussion, not at the barrel of a gun. The establishment of a democratic constitution in Iraq, just like the establishment of a constitution in Afghanistan last year, will be a landmark event in the history of the broader Middle East. And it will bring us closer to the day when the nation of Iraq can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself.

The terrorists are trying to stop the rise of democracy in Iraq because they know a free Iraq will deal a decisive blow to their strategy to dominate the Middle East. But the Iraqi people are determined to build a free future for their nation, and they are uniting against the terrorists.

We saw that unity earlier this month when followers of the terrorist Zarqawi tried to force Shiite Muslims to leave the Iraqi city of Ramadi. Sunni Muslims in that city came to the defense of their Shiite neighbors. As one Sunni leader put it, "We have had enough of Zarqawi's nonsense. We don't accept that a non-Iraqi should try to enforce his control over Iraqis." By choosing to stand with their fellow Iraqis, these Sunnis rejected the terrorists' attempt to divide their nation and incite sectarian violence.

Iraqis are working together to build a free nation that contributes to peace and stability in the region, and we will help them succeed. American and Iraqi forces are on the hunt, side by side to defeat the terrorists. As we hunt down our common enemies, we will continue to train more Iraqi security forces.

Our strategy is straightforward: As Iraqis stand up, Americans will stand down. And when Iraqi forces can defend their freedom by taking more and more of the fight to the enemy, our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

Our efforts in Iraq and the broader Middle East will require more time, more sacrifice,

and continued resolve. Yet people across the Middle East are choosing a future of freedom and prosperity and hope. And as they take these brave steps, Americans will continue to stand with them because we know that free and democratic nations are peaceful nations. By advancing the cause of liberty in the Middle East, we will bring hope to millions and security to our own citizens. And we will lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:20 a.m. on August 26 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 26 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Hurricane Katrina and the Iraqi Constitution in Crawford, Texas

August 28, 2005

This morning I spoke with FEMA Under Secretary Mike Brown and emergency management teams, not only at the Federal level but at the State level about the—Hurricane Katrina. I've also spoken to Governor Blanco of Louisiana, Governor Barbour of Mississippi, Governor Bush of Florida, and Governor Riley of Alabama. I want to thank all the folks at the Federal level and the State level and the local level who have taken this storm seriously. I appreciate the efforts of the Governors to prepare their citizenry for this upcoming storm.

Yesterday I signed a disaster declaration for the State of Louisiana, and this morning I signed a disaster declaration for the State of Mississippi. These declarations will allow Federal agencies to coordinate all disaster relief efforts with State and local officials. We will do everything in our power to help the people in the communities affected by this storm.

Hurricane Katrina is now designated a category 5 hurricane. We cannot stress enough the danger this hurricane poses to Gulf Coast communities. I urge all citizens to put their own safety and the safety of their families first by moving to safe ground. Please listen carefully to instructions provided by State and local officials.

On another matter, today Iraqi political leaders completed the process for drafting a permanent constitution. Their example is an inspiration to all who share the universal values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. The negotiators and drafters of this document braved the intimidation of terrorists, and they mourn the cowardly assassination of friends and colleagues involved in the process of drafting the constitution.

Their efforts follow the bravery of the Iraqis who voted by the millions to elect a Transitional Government in January. The example of those voters remains a humbling testament to the power of free people to shape and define their own destiny. We honor their courage and sacrifice, and we are determined to see the Iraqis fully secure their democratic gains.

The Iraqi people have once again demonstrated to the world that they are up to the historic challenges before them. The document they have produced contains far-reaching protections for fundamental human freedoms, including religion, assembly, conscience, and expression. It vests sovereignty in the people, to be expressed by secret ballot and regular elections. It declares that all Iraqis are equal before the law without regard to gender, ethnicity, and religion. This is a document of which the Iraqis and the rest of the world can be proud.

The political process now advances to another important stage for a new and free Iraq. In coming months, Iraqis will discuss and debate the draft constitution. On October the 15th, they will vote in a national referendum to decide whether to ratify the constitution and set the foundation for a permanent Iraqi Government. If the referendum succeeds, Iraqis will elect a new Government, to serve under the new constitution, on December the 15th, and that Government will take office before the end of the year.